

SUMMER 1971

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FARM WORKERS AS SERVANTS

"And as they were going along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said: 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' ... And the man wanted to turn back to bury his father; but Jesus was in a hurry: 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead; as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' ... 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said: 'Give up your comfort for the sake of the poor,' -but the man became sad and turned away for he had many possessions. ... Jesus said: 'I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life for many.'"

Christians are stuck with a radical scripture. We play down or rationalize its radicalness because of a natural desire to maintain our own comfortable life style. But in time we may be confronted by folks like Cesar Chavez and the farm workers with him who put before us in specific, unavoidable form a rugged, Biblical example of servanthood. Living on room and board & \$5.00 per week, they have given their lives over to bringing about liberation and new life for all farm workers. They work long and hard with a sense of urgency about doing what can be done with the one life God has given them. Often without any permanent home, they move from ranch to ranch or from boycott city to boycott city. They are misunderstood and abused by the principalities and powers that oppose them and even sometimes by those they seek to serve.

These farm worker unionists are not perfect but they are modern day examples of Christian servant hood & their example says to other farm workers and to us: "If you truly intend to change things so that there will be less suffering for people and more love and justice in the world then you must give up your security and your comfort; you must change the way you have organized your life and turn your time and energies over to those who suffer."



UNION BUILDING IS MORE HARD WORK

The work involved in building a national union for farm workers is beyond description. Consider the bare statistics: 40,000 members; 30,000 of them in the last 10 months; if the lettuce growers sign contracts that will mean 20,000 more; approximately 200 ranches
(continued')

LETTUCE BOYCOTT

On March 26, 1971, the Teamsters & the United Farm Workers signed a 3 year jurisdictional agreement that ended the Teamster-UFWOC dispute in lettuce. UFWOC's right to organize field workers is protected. Future jurisdictional disputes, should they occur, will be handled in 3 steps: (a) direct negotiation between the 2 unions (5-days); (b) mediation by Catholic Bishops Committee (15 days); (c) binding arbitration by an impartial arbitrator jointly appointed by George Meany, Pres. of the AFL-CIO & Frank Fitzsimmons, Genl. Vice Pres. of the Teamsters. Meany & Fitzsimmons countersigned the 3 years agreement. As a result of the agreement the lettuce boycott was suspended.

During the boycott moratorium the Teamsters have made their position clear to the lettuce growers and the growers have decided to begin conversations with the farm workers' union. Serious talks between UFWOC & the growers have taken place. At stake are nearly 200 lettuce and vegetable contracts that would cover approximately 20,000 workers. As long as there is progress in the talks the moratorium on the lettuce boycott will continue.

GRAPES AGAIN

In 1966 & 1967 when Gallo and other large wine grape growers signed contracts with UFWOC, the largest wine co-op fired workers who talked about the union & in other ways resisted all efforts by the workers to gain representation & collective bargaining. Allied Grape Growers is a co-op of 1700 wine grape growers. They own 75,000 acres & 14 wineries and employ 8-10,000 field workers during the harvest. Thru' United Vintners, Inc., they produce Italian Swiss Colony Wines & other wine products. United Vintners is now 82% owned by Heublein Inc., a Hartford, Conn. conglomerate that produces Smirnoff Vodka, Hamm's Beer, Don Q & El Dorado Rum, A-1 Sauce & many other products. The farm workers have launched a boycott of Heublein. They are especially asking their friends to boycott Smirnoff Vodka & Italian Swiss Colony Wines.

Most of you will remember that the Teamsters invaded the lettuce fields the same week that the Delano grape growers signed contracts with the farm workers

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UNION BUILDING HARD WORK

under contract with the possibility of 200 more this year. Every ranch has to elect a 5-man ranch committee. Every crew must select a steward. The committees and the stewards have to be trained to know everything about the contracts & to know how to enforce them. The new members must also learn about the union & the contract & the credit union & the Robt. F. Kennedy Medical Plan, etc. Many of the members were strikebreakers; some were even active opponents of the union before the victories. Every member has to be on file by alphabet & SS number; every member has to have a plastic membership card that shows his quarterly dues payment (dues are paid directly by the workers; they are not collected by the company). Hiring halls have to be established in every major farm worker area (14 new ones in the past 12 months). A decent seniority system has to be agreed to & implemented. Membership records - must be kept & services provided by the area offices. Farm workers must be trained to staff these offices and to work with the ranch committees & the shop stewards. Clinics & huelga schools and co-ops need to be developed in each new area. At the same time the boycott is carried on in every major city of the country. Organizers have been sent to new areas in Wash. State, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colo. & Florida. And it is all being done: 16-hrs. per day, 7 days per week, every week of the year. There are enormous problems! Some growers fight the changes. Labor contractors try to disrupt the hiring halls. Farm workers who in the past could complain only about the growers & the labor contractors can now complain about the union. But despite the problems the revolution in agricultural labor is being implemented. It will take years & the struggle must spread to every state. But the United Farm Workers intend to stay with it one day at a time for as long as it takes!

CALIF. SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS BOYCOTT

In a unanimous decision the Calif. Supreme Court on Apr. 15, 1971, ruled that the farm workers boycott of Bud Antle's lettuce is legal & protected by the first amendment. In Dec. 1970, Cesar Chavez spent 20 days in jail because a Salinas judge ruled the boycott illegal. Christmas Eve, the Supreme Court released Chavez pending a final determination. The boycott is legal.

Origin of the National Farm Worker Ministry

For three years representatives of denominations, Church Women United, state Migrant Ministries and farm worker groups have been working on a plan to unify the church's work with seasonal farm workers. The commitment to national coordination and strategy is based on several facts: (1) the natural relationships between farm worker home base areas in Texas, California and Florida and the migrant states "upstream", (2) the development of a national farm workers' movement under the leadership of Cesar Chavez & the United Farm Workers, (3) the need to set priorities and use limited resources wisely & effectively.

These concerns and a series of regional and national meetings have resulted in the development of the "National Farm Worker Ministry (continuing the National Migrant Ministry)". The NFWM describes itself as a "movement within the churches to be present with and support farm workers as they organize to overcome their powerlessness and achieve equality, freedom and justice."

The Commission on the California Migrant Ministry is actively involved in the formation of the NFWM and is recommending to the California Church Council that the CMM join fully in the work of the NFWM. The CMM has agreed to loan its director and office staff to the development of the NFWM.

GRAPES AGAIN (continued)

union (7/29/70). The lettuce struggle began immediately. The grape boycott was lifted and many growers outside the Delano area backed away from negotiations and never signed contracts. As a result thousands of table grape workers did not gain the union representation they had been seeking for 5 years. These farm workers are now striking in the Fresno area and are asking all friends of the farm workers to boycott non-union table grapes from California and Arizona.

A WORD ABOUT BOYCOTTS

Since 1965 we have been asked to boycott: Schenley, Perelli-Minetti, S & W Foods (because these corporations owned extensive acreage in grapes), table grapes, head lettuce & Heublein Inc. (and I've probably left out a few). Sometimes I hear cynical remarks about the value of helping in these boycotts. One thing needs to be said. It has been the boycotts that have won contracts for the farm workers.

Strikes cannot create enough pressure to bring about negotiations; only the power of the boycott has created that decisive pressure. We are going to be asked to boycott other products in the future. There are some things we should remember. With every strike & boycott different farm workers are involved. We may want to say no to another boycott, because - this union is too persistent and it's an inconvenience to us. But we would not be saying no to a union; we would be saying no to another important group of America's farm workers. We were willing to do without grapes for years to help grape pickers. We are willing to do without head lettuce for lettuce workers. We have done our small part to give other farm workers hope that they might pull out of their powerlessness. When the movement comes to their place and their crops, they will be depending on us to give them the same support.

(Pat Hoffman)



YUBA CITY TRAGEDY

The mass murder of farm workers in Yuba City has shocked the nation. The tragedy seems to be the act of a deranged mind; there appear to be no political or economic motives behind the killings. But the deaths of these 25 men remind us of how isolated from society migrant farm workers are. Too often they travel alone, away from friends & families & alienated from the institutions of the community.

Unknown to most of the public there are people who work with single, migrant farm workers in the Marysville-Yuba City area. Mr. Chris Bergtholdt, a retired farmer & one of the earliest supporters of the Delano strike runs a Center for Men in Marysville (not a "mission"). He and his men reported one of the victims missing 6-weeks before the first bodies were found.

Chris has tried to say a simple thing about the men who died: "*You can't stereotype them as bums or transients; they were each different; they were individuals, important people, loveable human beings.*"

He has also tried to call attention to the great influx of single men into the Yuba City area from across the nation because of high unemployment. Chris reports that there are twice as many men eating lunch at the Center this year as compared to last year. "*Without money and without jobs they disappear and not too many Americans care.*" (Marysville Men's Center, 318 Second Street, Marysville, Ca.)

LITERATURE & INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Forty Acres:

The Story of Cesar Chavez & the Farm Workers
—by Fr. Mark Day, O.F.M.: Praeger, \$6.95 (an insider's view of the movement)

Shadows in the Valley:

—by Frank Kostyu; Doubleday, \$4.95 (story of the Rev. Ed Krueger's work in Texas with background discussion of UFWOC and the churches)

Cesar Chavez:

—by Ruth Franchere; illustrated by Earl Thollander; Crowell Company, \$3.75 (a book for younger children)

Little Cesar:

—by Ralph de Toledano; Anthem Books (a right wing smear of Cesar Chavez and UFWOC; a careful review by Msgr. George Higgins of the U.S. Catholic Conference is available from the CMM office)

Dollar Harvest:

—by Samuel Berger (a carefully documented study of the far flung business operations of the American Farm Bureau Federation)

NEW FILMSTRIP: "Fruits, Vegetables and People"

—an excellent filmstrip on relationship of church folks to farm workers' movement. 106 frames; 33½ record; script and study guide; \$7.50 from Service Center, 7820 Reading Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

AVAILABLE FROM THE CMM OFFICE:

"Where's the Huelga"—by Pat Hoffman

"National Farm Worker Ministry (continuing the National Migrant Ministry)"—a 1 page policy description. Description of UFWOC'S position on legislation.

"La Causa Moves"—Christian Science Monitor—interview with Chavez and updating of the movement.

"Conversation with Cesar Chavez, George Wiley & Ralph Abernathy" (Journal, Nov-Dec. 1970)

"The Servant Leader—A New Life Style" (Journal, Spring 1971)

WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE FARM WORKERS

1. Continue to send food and money (c/o Pete Velasco, UFWOC Defense Fund, P.O. Box 130, Delano, Ca 93215). Food is needed for the families who work fulltime in the offices and also for the strikers in San Ysidro, Fresno and Calexico.
2. Volunteer to work full-time for a year or more with Cesar Chavez and the farm workers. You are guaranteed room, board and \$5.00 per week plus hard work and a practical education in non-violent social change. Contact CMM or Andy Anzaldua, UFWOC, P.O. Box 62, Keene, Ca 93531.
3. Continue your support of the CMM. We especially need financial support for our 14 summer volunteers who come to us from 6 Protestant denominations and from the Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths. They represent 9 states; all are college students or seminarians.
4. **Boycott non-union table grapes.** When you shop for table grapes ask to see the farm workers' black eagle label on the grape boxes in the cooler. It is important to check the boxes personally.
5. Don't buy Heublein products, especially Smirnoff Vodka and Italian Swiss Colony Wines.
6. Inform your friends and try to get information on the farm workers' struggle into denominational publications and church newsletters.
7. Save the date of Saturday, October 2, 1971 for a gathering of church folks at Delano or La Paz. We will meet with Cesar Chavez and also discuss the development of a National Farm Worker Ministry (see article in this Newsletter).